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OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHML #1544/01 1342227  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 142227Z MAY 07  
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6471  
INFO RUEHZS/ASEAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 001544

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: FILIPINOS FLOCK TO MID-TERM POLLS

REF: A. MANILA 1521

- B. MANILA 1494
- C. MANILA 1467
- D. MANILA 1215
- E. MANILA 1073

¶1. (U) Summary. Philippine mid-term elections took place on May 14, although results will not begin to be available until at least May 15, or at the national level perhaps as late as June 14. Turnout rates were high. Additional acts of violence took place on election day, but all Embassy observers remain safe. Civil society participation to monitor the polls and provide information was impressive. The enthusiasm of Philippine voters in turning out for the polls was palpable, and the dedication of electoral workers and volunteers was a tribute to the determination of the Philippine people to ensure the freest and fairest elections possible. There is nonetheless widespread concern that cheating will escalate during the canvassing process. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Counting began in the May 14 Philippine mid-term elections (reftels) following closure at 3 p.m. of polls at the 225,000 precincts in more 40,000 polling centers (almost all at schools) nationwide. Local-level results should be available by May 15, and will be posted publicly. Municipal- and provincial-level results (including the 220 members of the House of Representatives) will take anywhere between 2-10 days to tabulate, while the national-level canvassing center (for 12 Senators and all party list candidates) will open on May 16 and will likely need 20-30 to finalize its count.

¶3. (U) Turnout was heavy, despite the 90+ degree heat (with no air conditioning in most polling centers), reaching more than 50 percent in most precincts only a couple of hours after the 7 a.m. opening. COMELEC officials have predicted that the final turnout rate may reach 80 percent, although only about 10 percent of 500,000 registered absentee voters overseas cast their ballots through Philippine Embassies and Consulates. In many localities, "barangay" (the lowest governmental unit) captains (who will face election in October 2007) sent out workers to bring absent voters to the polls. There were isolated reports of vote-buying, but so far fewer than in the 2004 Presidential elections.

¶4. (U) More than 80 Embassy volunteers are serving as election observers, accredited by the Philippine Commission on Elections (COMELEC). All are safe as of COB. They are covering election sites throughout the nation, from the northern tip of Luzon island to General Santos City on Mindanao island. Ambassador and DCM toured various polling centers in Metro Manila as observers as well.

¶5. (U) The most common problem that Embassy observers and Philippine media reported was missing names on election rolls as well as inclusion of names of dead people. While apparently true in many precincts, the overall numbers do not appear to be significant. Many blamed the inaccurate lists on the lack of automation and inefficient COMELEC oversight. New this year, however, were lists

including a photo of the registered voters, so that the poll workers could verify their identity.

¶6. (U) Violence continued on election day, with several more deaths and injuries of both candidates and their supporters. The total of election-related deaths is well over 100 so far.

¶7. (U) The COMELEC suspended voting in one city in Lanao del Norte (central Mindanao) due to irregularities and delayed voting in Marawi City in neighboring Lanao del Sur due to the failure of ballot boxes to arrive in time.

¶8. (U) A reported one million or more volunteers -- from the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting, the National Movement for Free Elections, and other NGOs - were present at most polling centers, although the farther from Metro Manila, the less noticeable their presence became, according to Embassy observers. Political parties, notably the pre-dominant Lakas/Christian-Muslim-Democrats, also had observers at many polling centers. In many voting sites, volunteers outnumbered the actual voters at any given time.

¶9. (U) Virtually without exception, election workers (primarily schoolteachers), volunteers, and voters alike appeared warmly to welcome Embassy observers and U.S. support for the Philippine democratic process. Many offered thanks for our presence and interest.

¶10. (U) Comment: The enthusiasm of Philippine voters in turning out for the polls was palpable, and the dedication of electoral workers and volunteers was a tribute to the determination of the Philippine people to ensure the freest and fairest elections possible. Many nonetheless fear that there will cheating will escalate during the canvassing period.

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